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# Families in Canada

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**Focus on Canada**

## **Families in Canada**

**By: Janet Che-Alford  
Catherine Allan  
George Butlin**



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1994  
International Year  
of the Family

## Preface

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**Focus on Canada** is a series of publications portraying the people of Canada. The portrait is drawn through the analysis of the data collected by the 1991 Census of Population and Housing. Each publication examines a specific issue and provides a demographic, social, cultural and economic perspective.

The authors of this series have taken special care to make their analysis informative and easy to read. They make use of descriptive graphs and data tables to more clearly illustrate the information. Often the results are compared to previous censuses, showing how Canada and Canadians have changed over time.

The publications were prepared by analysts at Statistics Canada, and reviewed by peers from within the Agency as well as experts from external organizations. I would like to extend my thanks to all the contributors for their role in producing this useful and interesting publication.

I would like to express my appreciation to the millions of Canadians who completed their questionnaires on June 4, 1991. Statistics Canada is very pleased to be able to now provide this summary of the results. I hope you enjoy reading this study – and the others in this series.

Ivan P. Fellegi  
Chief Statistician of Canada





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## Highlights

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- There is no universal definition of the "family".
- Demographic, social, economic and technological changes, and shifting societal values have influenced the structure and form of families. As a result, new family forms emerge and new definitions evolve.
- In 1991, about 84% of Canadians, or some 23 million people, lived in families as husbands, wives, common-law spouses, lone parents or children.
- The number of couples cohabiting outside marriage more than doubled between 1981 and 1991, reaching nearly 726,000. In 1991, almost 1,452,000 persons lived in common-law unions.
- Husband-wife families still represented the majority (87.0%) of all families in 1991. Common-law couples accounted for a growing share of husband-wife families, increasing from 6.4% in 1981 to 11.3% in 1991.
- In 1991, there were nearly one million lone-parent families in Canada, representing 13% of all families. Four out of every five of these families were headed by a woman.
- In 1991, 40.2% of husband-wife families had no children at home. These families consisted of couples who were childless (16.3%) or empty-nesters (23.9%).
- The number of children under 25 living in married-couple households declined slightly between 1981 and 1991, while the number in common-law households and lone-parent households increased.
- A higher proportion of seniors maintained their own households in 1991 (83.5%) than in 1971 (74.9%). The proportion of seniors living alone has also risen from 18.4% in 1971 to 25.9% in 1991.

- More women with children are entering the labour force. Their participation rate has increased from 52.4% in 1981 to 68.4% in 1991.
- In any given week in 1988, over half of Canadian children under age 13 were in at least one non-parental child care arrangement.
- In 1992, men spent an average of 4.0 hours a day working at a paid job, compared to 2.4 hours for women. Men spent an average of 2.6 hours a day doing unpaid work, while women spent 4.5 hours.
- The average income of husband-wife families in 1990 was \$58,440. This compared to \$21,876 for female lone-parent families and \$38,285 for male lone-parent families.
- Among all families, female lone-parent families had the highest proportion spending 30% or more of their income on shelter. They were the most likely of all families to have problems in affording housing.

## Introduction

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A great deal of attention has been focused on changes occurring in the Canadian family. Numerous media reports have documented the recent decline of the typical family, which is defined as one with a husband in the labour force and a wife at home with children. There are frequent expressions of concern about the state of the Canadian family, and a widely-felt sense of uncertainty about its future.

Recent developments, such as an increase in the number of divorces, blended families, common-law couples, single parents, and the labour force participation of mothers with young children, are often cited as evidence of the uncertain future facing the Canadian family. Somehow, the implication is that the functions of care, nurturing, social support, and the imparting of values and guidance to children are being threatened by a new diversity of family forms that do not conform to the traditional ideal. Yet, family ties of blood, marriage and adoption continue to be crucial features of the organization of social life in Canada.

The importance of family life is evident in the continuing high proportion of Canadians who live in families. In 1991, about 84% of Canadians (roughly 23 million) lived in families as husbands, wives, common-law spouses, lone parents or children.<sup>1</sup> Now-married couples accounted for slightly more than half of this number, while the remainder were common-law couples (6%), lone parents (4%) and children (39%).

This report will document patterns of change and diversity in the family using data from the 1991 Census, the 1992 General Social Survey (GSS) and other Statistics Canada sources. It will provide a clear descriptive analysis of the major trends in the structure of the family, with emphasis on a historical perspective. Change and diversity are not necessarily detrimental to family functioning: the same statistical trends can often be interpreted in both a positive and negative manner.

Interpreting family trends is a complex and controversial task. Current changes in family form can be beneficial to some members and detrimental or inconsequential to others. For example, families with two earners may have an overall higher level of economic

well-being, along with increased educational and lifestyle opportunities. At the same time, such families may experience difficulty in balancing work and family obligations. This report does not fully address the range of issues surrounding the interpretations of family patterns. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the information presented here will act as a catalyst for future in-depth research and analyses.

This report begins by addressing the question: What is a family? Traditional definitions are contrasted with current and emerging definitions. The change and diversity in family structure is exemplified by a discussion of the controversial issue of what to include or exclude when defining the family.

Demographic profiles of Canadian families are presented in the second chapter. Recent demographic trends in family formation, expansion and dissolution are discussed. Family characteristics such as composition, size and structure are examined in light of historical trends.

The third chapter examines living arrangements, with emphasis on the age groups that have experienced the most dramatic changes – children and the elderly.

The final chapter examines the economic well-being of families. The focus is on how families differ in key economic indicators: labour force participation, family income and shelter costs. In addition, child care needs, time use and workplace policies are briefly discussed.



# Chapter 1

## What is a Family?

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### No Universal Definition

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The family is a well-studied and equally well-documented topic. Extensive research has been undertaken over the years, yet a universally applicable definition has not been found.

A generally accepted notion of the family is that it is a fundamental building block of society. However, this consensus on the basic role of the family has not resulted in a consensus on an exact definition of the family.

### The Family Is Changing

---

The term “family” can be defined in many different ways. Demographic, social, economic and technological changes, as well as changes in societal values, have greatly influenced the structure and form of families. It is because of these ongoing changes that new family forms emerge from time to time, and new definitions evolve.

“What has happened to the family?” is a question that has been posed by many researchers. Some have analyzed the family by looking at its evolution over time and by categorizing the changes. For example, Canadian sociologist Margrit Eichler has identified 7 major changes that have taken place in the past 25 years:<sup>1</sup>

- people are living longer;
- fewer children are born;
- technology has invaded the house;
- most women are now earning a salary;
- there are fewer marriages and more divorces;
- family violence is more recognized; and
- children's participation in the family is more accepted, demanding adults' interaction.

Similarly, Jean Veevers described 8 major trends occurring within the Canadian family:<sup>2</sup>

- a modification of gender roles;
- an increase in sexual freedom and a consequent decline in the double standard;
- an increase in freedom in mate selection;
- an increase in the visibility and prominence of unmarried persons, including an increase in awareness of the homosexual presence;
- an increase in divorce and remarriage;
- an increase of women in the work force, with subsequent problems of double workloads on the job and at home;
- a marked decline in fertility; and
- an increase in the visibility and prominence of elderly persons.

These changes are borne out by past and present statistics. On the demographic side, death, birth and marriage rates are decreasing while divorce rates are rising. Between 1971 and 1991, according to Statistics Canada *Health Reports*, the death rate per 1,000 population declined from 7.3 to 7.2, the birth rate dropped from 16.8 to 14.9 per 1,000 female population, while marriage rates fell from 8.9 to 6.4 per 1,000 population.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, divorce rates doubled from 1.4 per 1,000 population to 2.8 within these two decades.<sup>4</sup>

Socio-economic changes are also evident. For example, the number of couples cohabiting outside marriage more than doubled between 1981 and 1991. Also, cohabitation rose from 5.6% of all families in 1981 to nearly 9.9% in 1991<sup>5</sup>. Other phenomena such as raising children out of wedlock, remarriage, homosexual relationships – all once frowned upon – are now more conspicuous and numerous, and are gaining acceptance in society. The steady increase of women – especially married women – in the work force, as well as the aging of the population, are other factors that lead to changes in our society. The participation rate of women increased from 40% in 1971 to 60% in 1991.<sup>6</sup> An increase in the number of working women is associated with trends such as postponing childbearing, reducing women's economic dependency on men and thereby making divorce a more viable alternative to an unhappy marriage. Also on the rise is the proportion of the elderly population (aged 65 and over), from 1 in 10 in 1981 to almost 1 in 8 in 1991. The projected elderly population will increase at an even more rapid rate in the next few decades as baby boomers start to join the ranks of seniors.<sup>7</sup> The need for care-giving and family support networks will likewise increase. It is not unusual for modern adults to find themselves faced with the responsibility of caring for their children and their aging parents simultaneously.

Parallel to all these changes are technological innovations that have revolutionized twentieth-century daily life. Transportation improvements have shortened commuting time and increased mobility. Telecommunication technology advancements have begun to move the office to the home. Such innovations as telework, flexible work schedules and work-at-home programs have been implemented by some employers in both the public and private sectors. Also, technology has an impact on relationships within families. The availability of a wide variety of home entertainment products, such as television, video and personal computers, has an effect on the time family members spend with each other. Household labour-saving devices such as dishwashers and microwaves reduce the time spent on traditional family-related chores.

The impact of these changes on the family is so complex, continuous and irreversible that it is difficult to measure. In the next three chapters, some of these changes will be analyzed by examining family characteristics (such as size and structure), living arrangements and the economic well-being of families. Throughout, it should be noted that shifts in the structure and composition of families are, in fact, responses to profound demographic, social, economic and technological transformations.

## Definitions of Family

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What is a family? Most people cannot give a precise definition. A person in the street may say that a family is a group made up of parents and their children. Some may add grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces. Parents and children, as well as immediate relatives, seem to form the implicit concept of a family from the general public's point of view.

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines a family as a set of parents and children, or of relations, living together or not; the members of a household, esp. parents and their children; a person's children.

*The Gage Canadian Dictionary* explains it as a father, mother, and their children; a group of related people living in the same house.

*The Encyclopedia Americana* describes a family as a group of persons related by birth or marriage (ordinarily parents and their children) who reside in the same household. In common usage, the term has been extended to include ancestors ("family tree"). It is sometimes used for relatives of one spouse as opposed to those of the other ("my husband's family"), and colloquially for unrelated people living in the same household ("we're just one family").

The common elements among these definitions are parents, children and related people living under one roof. Like the general public's point of view, the focus is on the composition of the family, i.e., what it consists of. In addition, as the word "family" has its

root in the Latin word "familia" which means household, these definitions encompass the notion of living in the same house.

In the social sciences field, the definition of a family is more formalized.<sup>8</sup> George P. Murdock (1949) defined the family as:

*a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes; at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship; and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults.*

As Eichler (1983) has said, Murdock's definition exerted a powerful influence on the sociology of the family. Eichler examined two other sociological definitions: that of Rose Laub Coser and William N. Stephens. Coser (1974) reformulated Murdock's definition:

*a group manifesting the following organizational attributes: It finds its origin in marriage; it consists of husband, wife, and children born in their wedlock, though other relatives may find their place close to this nuclear group, and the group is united by moral, legal, economic, religious and social rights and obligations (including sexual rights and prohibitions as well as such socially patterned feelings as love, attraction, piety, and awe).*

Stephens (1963) defined it as:

*a social arrangement based on marriage and the marriage contract, including recognition of the rights and duties of parenthood, common residence for husband, wife and children, and reciprocal economic obligations between husband and wife.*

It appears that these definitions concern not only the composition and structure of the family, but also its functions. As function, composition and structure change over time, it is difficult to come up with a comprehensive definition that could accommodate all diversities, including old patterns and new forms and functions.

Eichler commented that the family definitions according to Murdock, Coser and Stephens have not quite captured the realities of modern families. None of these definitions includes lone-parent families or blended (step) families. She suggested the following working definition:

*A family is a social group which may or may not include adults of both sexes (e.g., lone-parent families), may or may not include one or more children (e.g., childless couples), who may or may not have been born in their wedlock (e.g., adopted children, or children by one adult partner of a previous union). The relationship of the adults may or may not have its origin in marriage (e.g., common-law couples), they may or may not share a common residence (e.g., commuting couples). The adults may or may not cohabit sexually, and the relationship may or may not involve such socially patterned feelings as love, attraction, piety, and awe.*

Eichler realized that this is not a very useful, cut-and-dried definition, but a realistic one. She admitted that even this definition excludes certain familial groups, such as homosexual couples and group arrangements.

Organizations and agencies concerned with family issues also provide their own definitions. The March, 1992 issue of *Transition* by the Vanier Institute of the Family presented a discussion on this subject. The Institute takes the approach of looking at "the common functions that families perform to the benefit of both the individual members of families and to the benefit of the larger society." The Institute advocates a definition that is "inclusive" rather than "exclusive"; one that does not rely on structure alone. Its focus is on what families do rather than what they look like – function rather than composition and structure – to determine what is "common across all those structures." The Institute defined the family as:

*Any combination of two or more persons who are bound together by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption/placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of some of the following: 1) physical maintenance and care of group members; 2) addition of new members through procreation or adoption; 3) socialization of children; 4) social control of members; 5) production, consumption and distribution of goods and services; and 6) affective nurturance.<sup>9</sup>*

This is admittedly a broad definition. The Vanier Institute of the Family does not use such basic elements as birth and adoption to differentiate family from non-family members, as do many other definitions.

Family studies is a course often taught in secondary school. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education used the following definition as the foundation for its family studies course:<sup>10</sup>

*The family is a social unit of interacting persons who make commitments, assume responsibilities, nurture each other, become socialized, transmit cultural and religious values, and share resources over time.*

This definition emphasizes the social, psychological, and economic aspects of the family unit, taking into consideration both physical and emotional relationships.

In the government sector, whether local, provincial or federal, the way in which the family is defined can affect the administration of policies and programs. For example, benefits from certain programs may be approved or denied according to whether the applicant qualifies as a family member. Matters such as property distribution, execution of a will or exercising responsibility over minors are a few examples.

In an attempt to give due consideration to family realities in all of its policies, the Government of Quebec created the Conseil de la famille in 1987 to study family issues. This organization developed the following operational definition of the family:

*A parent-child group bound by many and varied ties of mutual, lifetime support and for furthering the development of persons and societies at their source.<sup>11</sup>*

To respond to the declining fertility rate in the province at the time, the Quebec government introduced incentives such as maternity/paternity leave and bonuses, especially for the birth of the third child. As a result, the total fertility rate in Quebec began to increase in 1988 and up to 1991, it was still increasing. A closer look at the fertility rate by birth order showed that the birth of the third child was also on the rise.<sup>12</sup>

In a joint program against family violence and violence against women, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Health and Welfare Canada defined the family as:

*a grouping of individuals who are related by affection, kinship, dependency or trust.<sup>13</sup>*

One may note that the boundary of a family is quite broad here. Perhaps it is the intention of the program to keep it this way in light of the target population under consideration.

For the purpose of reporting income tax, Revenue Canada recently provided new guidelines for all opposite sex common-law couples who have lived in a conjugal relationship for a full year or are parents of the same child. Effective January 1, 1993, common-law spouses are treated the same as those who are legally married.

In the field of statistics, two official definitions are included in Statistics Canada's **1991 Census Dictionary**: census family and economic family.

**Census family** refers to a now-married couple (with or without never-married sons and/or daughters of either or both spouses), a couple living common-law (again with or without never-married sons and/or daughters of either or both partners), or a lone parent of any marital status, with at least one never-married son or daughter living in the same dwelling.

**Economic family** refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption.

For the purpose of the census, all census families are also counted as economic families, either on a one-to-one basis or where two or more census families together form one economic family. However, there are cases where economic families are not census families. For example, a parent living with a divorced son/daughter, or two brothers sharing living quarters constitute one economic family but not a census family.<sup>14</sup>

The conceptual difference between a census and an economic family is similar to the popular distinction between a nuclear and an extended family. A nuclear family is made up of the union of a man and woman along with their offspring, usually living in a private or separate dwelling. When the nuclear family is expanded to include not only the parents and their unmarried children living at home, but also the married children, their spouses, and their offspring, this arrangement is called an extended family. The nuclear family is the most basic and common of the various types of families in existence. It is very much adhered to by a majority of the Canadian population. On the other hand, extended families may be more common among certain cultural or ethnic groups, or in times of economic hardship when doubling up in a household may occur.

## **Fifty Years of Family Definitions in the Canadian Census**

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Over the past 50 years, Canadian censuses have collected and coded family data with the challenging objective of providing conceptual equivalence between censuses on one hand, and keeping up with the reality of family changes on the other. Looking at the family definitions and related published data from each census, it is possible to trace some of the changes that have occurred in families.

Prior to the 1941 Census, the definition of family appears to have been based on the concept of a housekeeping unit in which people ate and slept under the same roof. In a sense, the family represented a basic economic unit, and little distinction was made between the household and the family.

A major change in the definition of family occurred in 1941, when the concept of the "nuclear family" was introduced. Unlike the previous censuses, relatives who were not part of the immediate family were excluded as family members, whether or not they were dependent upon the head of the family. In 1941, about 88% of the 2.5 million families in Canada were nuclear families.

In the same census year, the definition of children was also modified. Only those unmarried sons and daughters of the head who were still living at home, were counted as children. Statistics on children were published only for those under 25 years of age.

During the 1951-1976 period, subtle changes were made to the classification of family members. For example, in the 1956 Census, Statistics Canada first distinguished between the census family and the economic family, as discussed earlier. These definitions have remained basically unchanged since that time. Further changes came in 1976, when grandchildren, nephews and nieces, who had been formerly treated as actual sons and daughters of the household head if they were guardianship children, began to be categorized according to their actual relationship to the household head.

Non-traditional living arrangements started to become more common in the late 1960s and 1970s – a period of cultural upheaval, social movements and experiments. In the

collection of data for the 1976 Census, while there was a reference to common-law relationships, there were no questions that specifically asked about such relationships. Nevertheless, 73,000 respondents indicated that they were living common-law. A separate category of common-law partner was added to the list of relationships on the 1981 questionnaire, making that census the first to count common-law couples. The increase in the number of common-law couples – from 356,610 in 1981 to 486,940 in 1986 – led to the addition of a separate question on common-law status in the 1991 Census.

While the Canadian census is sensitive to societal changes, changes to the census are made gradually due to a number of factors. These include the concern about historical comparability of data, the five-year cycle, the respondent burden placed on the entire population and finally, the total cost.

Another living arrangement to gain visibility in recent years is people living together as same-sex partners. Write-ins on 1991 census questionnaires which indicated same-sex relationships were retained for analysis. They show that the terminology used by respondents to describe such relationships was quite varied, and that further work is required to identify a common lexicon. Also, because these were voluntary write-ins, they can not be considered an accurate count of same-sex partners.



# Chapter 2

## Demographic Trends and Diversity of Family Forms

---

Many factors affect family formation, expansion and dissolution. An examination of the trends in marriage, divorce and birth rates helps to shed light on how present family patterns have developed. In addition, an overview of family structure, size and composition can provide some insight into changing family patterns.

### Demographic Changes

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#### Marriage Trends

Marriage is less common than in the past. The marriage rate (the number of marriages per 1,000 population) was 6.4 in 1991, the lowest level since the early 1930s, when it ranged from 5.9 to 6.4.<sup>1</sup> (**Appendix Table A.1**). In 1991, 172,251 marriages were recorded in Canada, down 8.2% from the previous year. The number of marriages increased significantly during the 1960s and 1970s, reaching a record high of 200,470 in 1972. Gradual decreases started during the late 1970s and early 1980s, followed by slight increases in the late 1980s. Apart from these small increases, the rate has been steadily dropping from the historical high of 9.2 in 1972.

Recent decreases in the marriage rate are due in part to the increasing number of common-law unions. More Canadians are living in such unions, either as a prelude to legal marriage or as a permanent arrangement. The 1992 General Social Survey showed that the proportion of those aged 18 to 64 who had ever lived in a common-law union increased from 16% in 1984 to 28% in 1990. Additional reasons for the decrease in the marriage rate include economic conditions, delayed marriage and the decreasing proportion of Canadians in the prime marriage age group of 20 to 29.

There has been a trend toward delayed marriage: from 1971 to 1991, the average age of those marrying for the first time increased 3.1 years to 25.7 for women and 2.8 years to 27.7 for men. Both men and women are now most likely to marry between the ages of 25 and 34. Until the 1980s, women were most likely to marry between the ages of 20 and 24.

More marriages today are remarriages. In the 1950s and 1960s, 9 out of 10 marriages involved single persons. Less than 10% were of widowed or divorced persons. By 1991, just over three-quarters of all marriages involved single persons for both brides and grooms. By comparison, the proportion involving previously divorced persons increased to about 20% of marriages for both men and women. The proportion of marriages involving widowed persons has declined.

A recent report on marriage noted that due to factors such as higher divorce rates, the increasing number of remarriages and older age at first marriage, the average duration of marriage has decreased.<sup>2</sup> Marriages between persons born in the late 1950s are expected to be about seven years shorter than those between persons born in the 1920s. The length of marriages ending in divorce has fluctuated over the past two decades. In 1971, the median duration was 12.6 years. By 1981, it had decreased to 10 years but has increased since then, reaching 10.9 in 1990.<sup>3</sup> This may be attributable in part to economic factors. It remains to be seen if this trend will continue.

## **Divorces**

The divorce rate (the number of divorces per 1,000 population) increased dramatically after the *Divorce Act* was passed in 1968, reaching 2.9 in 1982 (**Appendix Table A.2**).<sup>4</sup> Further increases followed the liberalization of the law in 1985, when marriage breakdown became the only ground for divorce. In 1987, the rate climbed to nearly 3.6, after which it decreased. By 1991, it was down to 2.8. This is partly due to the increased incidence of common-law relationships, and perhaps to economic reasons. It has also been suggested that because people are marrying later, they may be less likely to divorce.

## **Births**

In 1991, just over 400,000 births were recorded, a slight (0.7%) decrease from 1990, but nearly 9% more than in 1987, the year with the lowest number of births in the 1980s (**Appendix Table A.3**).<sup>5</sup> The birth rate (number of live births per 1,000 population) was 14.9, compared with 15.3 in 1990. Largely due to women who had postponed having their first child, the rate rose temporarily between 1988 and 1990. This trend is reflected in the increases in the fertility rates for women aged 30 to 39. Indeed, in 1990, the fertility rate for women aged 30 to 34 was slightly higher than for women aged 20 to 24.

Delayed childbearing is also reflected in the median age of women giving birth. In 1991, it was 28.0, compared with 25.4 in 1971. The proportion of first order births (that is, the first child) of total annual births has increased significantly for women in their late twenties and thirties.

In 1991, 24.5% of all births were to single women. This is up from 12.6% in 1981 and 5.3% in 1974. More women are having a child and remaining unmarried, resulting in the creation of a lone-parent family, while others are in common-law relationships.

## Diversity of Family Form

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While living in a family remains the dominant living arrangement in Canada, the form a family may take has become more diverse over the past two decades. Husband-wife families (that is, families of couples with or without children at home) still make up the large majority of all families (87.0%). The balance (13.0%) are lone-parent families. The proportion of husband-wife families has decreased somewhat, however, from 88.7% in 1981 and 90.5% in 1971.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, the proportion of lone-parent families has increased from 11.3% and 9.5%, respectively.

The number of husband-wife families also increased at a slower rate than did the number of lone-parent families between 1986 and 1991 (8.8% versus 11.8%). It is, however, the change in the relative distribution of now-married and common-law couple families within husband-wife families that has been most dramatic.

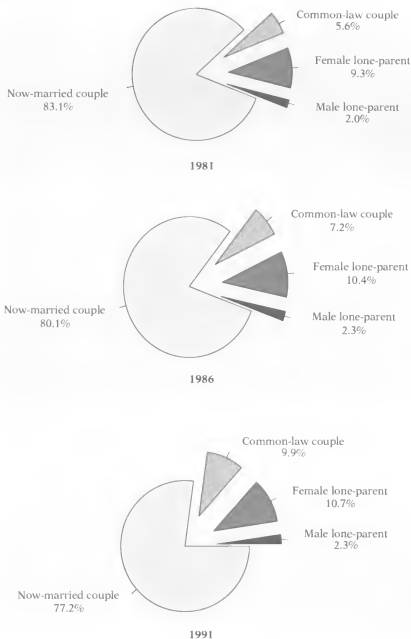
### One in Ten Families are Common-law

In 1991, common-law families represented nearly 10% of all families, up from 7.2% in 1986 and 5.6% in 1981 (**Chart 2.1**). The number of these families increased by 49.1% from 1986 to 1991, compared with an increase of 5.2% for now-married families. Indeed, while the number of now-married families has increased by 8.0% since 1981, the number of common-law unions has more than doubled in the same period. Common-law couples make up an increasing proportion of husband-wife families. In 1991, the figure was 11.3%, up from 8.3% in 1986 and 6.4% in 1981.

Almost 60% of the 1,452,000 common-law partners were under the age of 35 and over 60% had never been married. More than half were between the ages of 20 and 35. However, between 1986 and 1991 the growth in the number of common-law partners aged 35 and older was higher than that for those under 35. Over 64% of all female partners and almost 63% of the male partners had never been married, while an additional 25% of the women and 27% of the men were divorced.<sup>7</sup>

There are several social and economic reasons for the increase in the number of common-law unions. One is that such unions may provide the same economic and social support found in legal marriages, without the same degree of emotional and economic cost when they end.<sup>8</sup> It has been noted that the data for births outside marriage suggest that having children is increasingly considered acceptable by common-law couples.<sup>9</sup> It has become more socially acceptable to form both a union and a family without the sanction of marriage. Increasingly, tax legislation, benefit packages and financial arrangements acknowledge the extent and prevalence of cohabitation.

**Chart 2.1**  
**Families by Family Structure, Canada, 1981, 1986 and 1991**



Sources: Statistics Canada, *Families: Part 1*, Catalogue No. 93-106 and *Families: Number, Type and Structure*, Catalogue No. 93-312. Total husband-wife families equal now-married couple families plus common-law couple families.

## Growing Number of Lone-parent Families

By 1991, there were nearly 1 million (954,705) lone-parent families in Canada, up 11.8% from 1986.<sup>10</sup> This increase was more moderate, however, than previous increases: 19.6% from 1981 to 1986 and 27.7% from 1976 to 1981. Lone-parent families now account for 13.0% of all families, up from 12.7% in 1986 and 11.3% in 1981. This proportion is not unprecedented. In 1931 it was 13.6%, and 12.2% in 1941. But as will be discussed in Chapter 4, these families, particularly those headed by women, are disadvantaged in many ways.

Most lone-parent families (82.4%) are headed by women. Indeed, the distribution of male and female lone-parent families has remained virtually unchanged since 1976.

Female lone parents tend to be younger than male lone parents. In 1991, nearly one-third were between the ages of 15 to 34, compared with less than 15% of male lone parents. Over half of all male lone parents were 45 years of age or older. Less than 40% of female lone parents were in this category. There has, however, been a steady increase in the proportion of lone parents, both male and female, in the 25 to 44 age group. The proportions in the other age groups have been steadily declining since at least 1976.

In 1991, 20.0% of all families with children at home were lone-parent families. This compares with 18.8% in 1986 and 16.6% in 1981. Lone-parent families, however, tend to have fewer children than husband-wife families with children. The average number of children at home was 1.6 for the former, compared with 1.9 for the latter.

While the proportion of lone-parent families is not unprecedented, the dominant reason for the creation of such families has changed. Historically, most lone parents were widows or widowers. Until the early 1970s, more than 60% of lone parents were widowed. In 1991, this figure had dropped to less than one-quarter. This is partly due to the increase in the average age of the death of the spouse. Increasingly, since the 1968 *Divorce Act* and further amendments in 1985, marriage breakdown is a factor. The divorce rate doubled between 1971 and 1991. The proportion of divorced lone parents increased from 3.1% in 1951 and 12.1% in 1971, to 32.7% in 1991. Over the same period, the percentage of separated lone parents remained much the same, ranging from 26.5% in 1956 to 33.7% in 1971. In 1991, however, the figure declined for the second time since 1981.

In the 1950s, less than 2% of all lone parents were single. By 1971, the figure was 7.7%, and it steadily increased to 17.5% in 1991. From 1981 to 1991, the number of lone parents who were single and had never married more than doubled. In 1991, nearly one in five female lone parents was single. The percentage of births to single women has more than doubled between 1980 and 1990. Some of these women are, of course, in common-law relationships or subsequently marry, but the trend is also a factor in the formation of female lone-parent families.

## Husband-Wife Families More Diverse

Lone-parent families have been increasing as a proportion of all families since 1971. Nevertheless, the dominant family form remains husband-wife families, which made up 87.0% of all families in 1991.<sup>11</sup> The composition of husband-wife families has, however, been changing significantly. For example, in 1991, 40.2% of these families did not have children at home. This does not reflect the common perception of a family being composed of a husband, wife and children.

Husband-wife families may be classified into 3 groups according to their composition: childless families, families with children at home, and empty nest families. Each category can be further subdivided according to the age of the wife. Young childless families are those in which the wife is less than 35 years of age and has not yet borne children. Older childless families are those in which the wife is aged 35 or over and less likely to bear children. Families with children are categorized in the same fashion; i.e., according to the age of the wife. Empty nest families are those in which the wife has borne children who have since left home. These families can also be classified by the age of the wife into younger and older groups.<sup>12</sup>

In 1971, young childless families accounted for 8.3% of all husband-wife families<sup>13</sup> (Table 2.1). This proportion increased to 11.5% in 1981, then fell slightly to 10.3% in 1991. Among all husband-wife families, the proportion of older childless families increased slightly from 5.6% in 1971 to 6% in 1991.

The proportion of husband-wife families with children at home fell steadily from 70.3% in 1971 to 64.1% in 1981, and 59.8% in 1991. For families in which the wife was less than 35 years of age, not only did their proportion fall (from 28.4% in 1971 to 26.7% in 1981, and to 21.0% in 1991), their number decreased by over 150,000 between 1981 and 1991. On the other hand, the proportion of older families with children at home declined slightly between 1971 and 1981 and increased marginally from 1981 to 1991.

The most significant trend in husband-wife families has been the increase in empty nest families. In 1971, these families represented only 15.7% of all husband-wife families. By 1981, the proportion had risen to 19.4% and by 1991 had reached 23.9%. Their number has more than doubled since 1971. As such, they represent a market segment with demands for particular goods and services.

**Table 2.1****Distribution of Husband-wife Families by Stage in the Life Cycle, Canada, 1971, 1981 and 1991**

Stage in the life cycle	1971	% of total	1981	% of total	1991	% of total
<b>Total husband-wife families</b>	<b>4,585,045</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5,611,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6,402,090</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Childless families</b>	<b>639,925</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>921,810</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>1,042,655</b>	<b>16.3</b>
Wife age under 35	382,540	8.3	647,380	11.5	659,170	10.3
Wife age 35 and over	257,385	5.6	274,430	4.9	383,485	6.0
<b>With children at home</b>	<b>3,223,710</b>	<b>70.3</b>	<b>3,598,860</b>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>3,830,265</b>	<b>59.8</b>
Wife age under 35	1,303,585	28.4	1,496,690	26.7	1,345,995	21.0
Wife age 35 and over	1,920,125	41.9	2,102,170	37.5	2,484,270	38.8
<b>Empty nest</b>	<b>721,400</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>1,090,835</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>1,529,170</b>	<b>23.9</b>
Wife age under 55	205,555	4.5	291,505	5.2	445,155	7.0
Wife age 55 and over	515,840	11.2	799,325	14.2	1,084,010	16.9

Sources: Unpublished census tabulations and Statistics Canada, *Families: Social and Economic Characteristics*. 1991 Census, Catalogue No. 93-320.

### **Families Without Children Increasing**

In addition to the trends discussed above, there have also been changes in the proportion of families with and without children at home. In 1991, over one-third (35.1%) of all families did not have children at home.<sup>14</sup> This number increased 17.2% from 1986, over three times the 5.4% increase in the number of families with children at home. Over 1 million or 14.1% of these families were childless; that is, they had not yet had children. The remainder (21.0%) were empty nest families in which the children had left home.

Of families without children at home, common-law couples were much more likely than now-married couples to be childless. Over three-quarters of common-law families without children at home were childless, compared with one-third of now-married families. Less than one-quarter of common-law families without children at home were empty nest families, compared with two-thirds of now-married families.

However, the majority of families still had children at home. Nearly two out of every three families (64.9%) had children at home in 1991. This was down, however, from 67.3% in 1986 and 68.2% in 1981. Just under half of all families were now-married couples with children. An additional 4.1% were common-law couples with children. Together they form nearly 52% of all families, down from 56.9% in 1981. Just over 6 out of every 10 now-married couples had children at home, down from 66.2% in 1981. It is interesting to note that 41.6% of common-law couples had children at home, up from 34.2% in 1981.

### **Smaller Families**

Although the number of families has been increasing, the long-term trend toward smaller families continues. Average family size, however, is declining at a slower pace than in previous decades. It was 3.1 in 1991, virtually the same as in 1986, but down from 3.3 in 1981 and 3.7 in 1971.

The major reason underlying this decrease is the long-term decline in the fertility rate. This rate declined from a high of 3.9 in 1959 during the baby-boom period, to 1.7 during the late 1970s and 1980s. It rose slightly to 1.8 births per woman in 1991.

As a result, an increasing proportion of families does not have children at home. After decreasing somewhat in the 1970s, the proportion of families without children at home has since been increasing. In 1991, it was 35.1%, up from 31.8% a decade earlier. Just over 16% of husband-wife families were childless in 1991. And, as discussed above, there are more empty nest families, the number having grown by 40.2% between 1981 and 1991.

Families today also tend to have fewer children. The average number of children at home has declined, reaching 1.2 in 1991 (**Table 2.2**). Just over half of all families had only one or two children at home. The proportion with three or more declined to 12.3%. Families with five or more are becoming increasingly rare, accounting for less than 1% in 1991.

Another factor contributing to smaller family size is the increasing number of lone-parent families, which are by definition smaller than husband-wife families. Lone-parent families averaged 2.6 persons per family in 1991, compared with 3.1 persons among husband-wife families. Lone-parent families also tend to have fewer children than husband-wife families with children at home. In 1991, the majority (58.6%) had one child, compared with 36.2% of husband-wife families. Lone-parent families are less likely to have two children, 30.0%, compared with 42.9% of husband-wife families.

Similarly, when husband-wife families are disaggregated into families of now-married and common-law couples, the influence of the increasing incidence of common-law families is evident. In 1991, common-law couple families were 20% more likely than now-married couple families to have no children at home. Over half of common-law families with children at home had only one child, while 86.8% had one or two. Just over one-third of now-married couple families had one child; 78.5% just over one or two.

Overall, just over 80% of families with children at home had one or two.



**Table 2.2**  
**Families by Number of Children at Home, Canada, 1991**

	Total families	Husband- wife families	Married couple families	Common- law couple families	Lone- parent families	Male lone- parent families	Female lone- parent families
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,356,170</b>	<b>6,401,455</b>	<b>5,675,510</b>	<b>725,950</b>	<b>954,705</b>	<b>168,240</b>	<b>786,470</b>
Families without children at home	2,579,850	2,579,845	2,155,900	423,950	N/A	N/A	N/A
Families with children at home	4,776,320	3,821,610	3,519,605	302,005	954,705	168,240	786,470
Families by number of children at home							
1 child	1,944,865	1,384,995	1,222,185	162,805	559,875	104,705	455,170
2 children	1,926,805	1,640,065	1,540,815	99,250	286,740	47,000	239,740
3 children	690,700	608,140	578,510	29,625	82,555	12,685	69,875
4 children	165,235	146,065	138,280	7,785	19,170	2,870	16,305
5 or more children	48,715	42,350	39,820	2,525	6,370	985	5,385
Average number of children per family	1.2	1.1	1.2	0.7	1.6	1.5	1.6

N/A Not applicable. By definition, all lone-parent families have children at home.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Families: Number, Type and Structure*. 1991 Census of Canada, Catalogue No. 93-312.

**Table 3.1 Children and Never-married Persons Less Than 25 Years of Age, Canada, 1981-1991**

Living arrangements	Total			0 to 17 years			18 to 24 years		
	1981	1986	1991	1981	1986	1991	1981	1986	1991
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,083,360</b>	<b>8,766,175</b>	<b>8,871,590</b>	<b>6,795,765</b>	<b>6,520,045</b>	<b>6,787,735</b>	<b>2,287,590</b>	<b>2,246,130</b>	<b>2,083,865</b>
Living in private households	9,012,890	8,689,395	8,807,305	6,766,675	6,487,470	6,755,370	2,246,215	2,201,925	2,051,940
Living with parents	8,252,410	8,019,535	8,128,245	6,590,035	6,332,815	6,571,400	1,662,375	1,686,715	1,556,835
Living with two parents	7,196,855	6,863,845	6,884,350	5,812,420	5,484,195	5,609,140	1,384,435	1,379,650	1,275,210
Living with lone parent	1,055,545	1,155,690	1,243,895	777,615	848,625	962,265	277,935	307,060	281,635
female lone parent	874,795	956,885	1,033,735	655,280	716,670	814,905	219,520	240,210	218,830
male lone parent	180,750	198,805	210,160	122,335	131,955	147,360	58,415	66,850	62,805
Living with other relatives	247,360	212,075	208,335	100,355	95,605	106,255	147,000	116,470	102,075
Living with grandparents	67,350	74,330	88,095	56,290	61,060	73,390	11,055	13,270	14,705
Living with non-relatives	322,510	310,265	344,250	73,725	57,665	75,855	248,785	252,600	268,395
Living alone(1)	190,620	147,520	126,480	2,565	1,375	1,850	188,060	146,140	124,630
Living in collective or institutional households	70,470	76,780	64,285	29,090	32,575	32,365	41,375	44,205	31,925

(1) In the census, persons living alone must be 15 years of age or over. Therefore, for this category, the age group 0 to 17 includes only those aged 15 to 17.

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Families: Number, Type and Structure*. 1991 Census of Canada, Catalogue No. 93-312 and unpublished tabulations. Excludes persons temporarily absent from their usual place of residence.

The number of persons aged 17 years or less living with other relatives increased by 5.9% between 1981 and 1991, but decreased by 30.6% for those aged 18 to 24. During the same period, the number of young persons (0 to 17) living with their grandparents increased by 30.4%, while the increase for the 18 to 24 age group was 33.0%. The number of young persons living with non-relatives increased by 2.9%, compared with 7.9% for the 18 to 24 age group. The number of never-married persons under 25 living alone declined by 33.6% between 1981 and 1991. Of those who did live alone, 98.5% were between 18 and 24 years of age, while the remainder were aged 15 to 17.<sup>3</sup> Although the number of persons aged 0 to 17 living in collective or institutional households increased by 11.3% between 1981 and 1991, it decreased by 22.8% for the 18-24 age group.

## Children in Family Households

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In 1981, 95.2% of children living in family households were under 25, while the remainder (4.8%) were 25 or older (**Table 3.2**). By 1991, 92.4% of children in family households were under 25, and 7.6% were 25 or older. While the number of children under 25 decreased by 1.5% from 1981 to 1991, the number aged 25 or older increased by a dramatic 62.3%.

When family households are examined by structure, we see that the number of children under 25 living in married couple households declined by 8.6% between 1981 and 1991. There were, however, increases in the number in common-law couple (127.4%), female lone-parent (19.2%) and male lone-parent (18.5%) households. The decade also saw an increase in the number of children 25 and over who were living in married couple and common-law couple households, at 70.0% and 290.7% respectively, while increases for female lone-parent and male lone-parent households were 45.2% and 43.5%.

These trends illustrate some of the changes in family households with children, particularly for common-law couple and lone-parent households. Despite the growing diversity, three out of every four families with children were married couple families at the time of the 1991 Census.

**Table 3.2**  
**Children in Family Households, Canada, 1981-1991**

Age groups	Children in family households							
	Total children	Total husband-wife	Married couple	Common-law couple	Total lone-parent	Male lone-parent	Female lone-parent	Other (1)
<b>1981</b>								
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,666,685</b>	<b>7,298,455</b>	<b>7,084,930</b>	<b>213,525</b>	<b>1,156,060</b>	<b>194,320</b>	<b>961,740</b>	<b>212,165</b>
Less than 25 years	8,252,405	7,060,455	6,848,540	211,915	994,910	165,765	829,145	197,035
25 and over	414,280	238,000	236,390	1,610	161,150	28,555	132,595	15,130
<b>1986</b>								
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,578,340</b>	<b>7,073,655</b>	<b>6,767,860</b>	<b>305,795</b>	<b>1,295,220</b>	<b>221,655</b>	<b>1,073,565</b>	<b>209,465</b>
Less than 25 years	8,019,535	6,737,185	6,435,040	302,145	1,093,270	183,455	909,815	189,080
25 and over	558,805	336,470	332,820	3,650	201,950	38,200	163,750	20,385
<b>1991</b>								
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,800,735</b>	<b>7,146,585</b>	<b>6,658,420</b>	<b>488,165</b>	<b>1,418,515</b>	<b>237,365</b>	<b>1,181,150</b>	<b>235,645</b>
Less than 25 years	8,128,240	6,738,530	6,256,655	481,875	1,184,980	196,385	988,595	204,745
25 and over	672,495	408,055	401,765	6,290	233,535	40,980	192,555	30,900

(1) Other includes multi-family households.

Source: Statistics Canada, unpublished census tabulations.

## Seniors' Living Arrangements

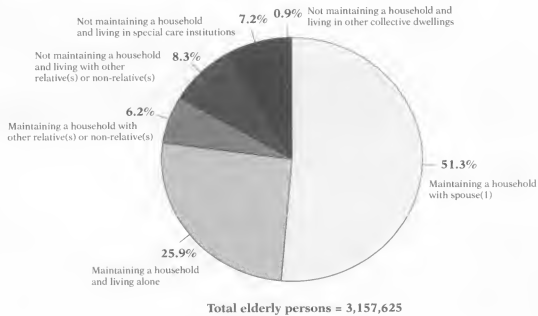
The issue of living arrangements for seniors raises 2 key points--seniors' financial ability to live independently and their social relationships with family and friends. These two factors may affect the well-being and quality of life of elderly Canadians. The financial/independent living dimension is examined by differentiating between those elderly persons who maintain their own household<sup>4</sup> and those who do not. Social relationships are measured by the presence or absence of a spouse, relative, or friend in the same household as the elderly person.

The ability to maintain a household can enhance the quality of life for seniors, as it increases the control and independence that a person has over his or her day-to-day activities. Living with family or friends sets up a potential base of social support for seniors, and provides a readily available basis for meaningful contact with loved ones.<sup>5</sup>

### Maintaining One's Own Household: 1991

In 1991, there were close to 3.2 million elderly persons (aged 65 and over) living in Canada. The majority of these elderly persons (83.5%) lived in the household they maintained. Indeed, a large proportion of them, about 51.3%, maintained their household with the presence of a spouse; 6.2% maintained it with the presence of other relative(s) or non-relative(s); and 25.9% maintained it while living alone (**Chart 3.1**).

**Chart 3.1**  
**Proportion of Elderly Persons (65 and over) by Living Arrangements and Maintenance of Household, Canada, 1991**



(1) Includes both spouses if at least one spouse is the primary household maintainer.  
 Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census unpublished tabulation.

Younger seniors (aged 65 to 74) were more likely to maintain their own household than their older counterparts (aged 75 and over): 90.5% versus 73.1% (**Table 3.3**). Younger seniors probably have more financial resources and are in better health – two factors that affect the ability to maintain a household.

The proportion of seniors living with spouses and maintaining their own households was also higher among younger seniors, at 62.3%, compared with 35.0% of older seniors living in the same arrangement. On the other hand, there is a higher proportion of older seniors who live alone (31.7%) than younger seniors (22.0%).

The death of a spouse, more often the husband, is the most common reason that seniors live alone. In fact, over three-quarters of the 818,110 seniors who maintained their household and lived alone were women. Needless to say, older senior women (25.1%) were more likely to live alone than their younger counterparts (16.4%).

### **Non-household Maintainers: 1991**

In 1991, 16.5% of all seniors did not maintain their households. This percentage was much higher for older than for younger seniors, at 26.9% and 9.5% respectively (**Table 3.3**). It is very likely that older seniors may have fewer of the financial resources needed to maintain a household, and may be less able, for health reasons, to perform household chores.

About 8.3% of all seniors did not maintain their households, but were without a spouse and lived with other relative(s) or non-relative(s). Another 7.2% lived in special care institutions, and 0.9% in other collective dwellings (**Chart 3.1**).

The probability of living with other relative(s) or non-relative(s) was higher for older than for younger seniors, about 10.7% for the former and 6.7% for the latter. Also, older seniors were more likely to live in special care institutions than younger seniors, 15.0% versus 2.0%. Women made up the overwhelming majority of seniors in this living arrangement; about 70.9% of the 228,615 elderly population in special care institutions were female.

**Table 3.3****Living Arrangements, Age and Sex of Elderly Population (65 and over), Canada, 1971, 1981 and 1991**

	Total 65 and over	%	65 to 74 years	%	75 and over	%
<b>Total 1991</b>	<b>3,157,625</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,887,110</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,270,515</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Maintaining their own household	2,636,580	83.5	1,708,225	90.5	928,350	73.1
Living with spouse(1)	1,621,230	51.3	1,176,030	62.3	445,200	35.0
Male	925,840	29.3	643,610	34.1	282,225	22.2
Female	695,390	22.0	532,415	28.2	162,980	12.8
Living alone	818,110	25.9	415,355	22.0	402,755	31.7
Male	189,890	6.0	105,850	5.6	84,040	6.6
Female	628,220	19.9	309,500	16.4	318,715	25.1
Living with others(2)	197,240	6.2	116,845	6.2	80,395	6.3
Male	51,565	1.6	31,570	1.7	19,995	1.6
Female	145,675	4.6	85,275	4.5	60,400	4.8
Not maintaining their own household	521,045	16.5	178,885	9.5	342,160	26.9
Male	157,820	5.0	66,860	3.5	90,960	7.2
Female	363,225	11.5	112,025	5.9	251,205	19.8
Living in special care institutions	228,615	7.2	38,225	2.0	190,390	15.0
Male	66,600	2.1	16,510	0.9	50,095	3.9
Female	162,015	5.1	21,715	1.2	140,295	11.0
Living in other collective dwellings	29,685	0.9	13,685	0.7	16,000	1.3
Male	9,355	0.3	5,480	0.3	3,870	0.3
Female	20,330	0.6	8,205	0.4	12,125	1.0
Living in other situations(3)	262,745	8.3	126,975	6.7	135,770	10.7
Male	81,865	2.6	44,875	2.4	36,990	2.9
Female	180,880	5.7	82,100	4.4	98,780	7.8
<b>Total 1981</b>	<b>2,347,945</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,469,165</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>878,785</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Maintaining their own household	1,884,735	80.3	1,289,755	87.8	594,980	67.7
Living with spouse(1)	1,163,585	49.6	880,895	60.0	282,690	32.2
Male	688,420	29.3	502,475	34.2	185,940	21.2
Female	475,170	20.2	378,415	25.8	96,760	11.0
Living alone	565,705	24.1	316,395	21.5	249,310	28.4
Male	131,070	5.6	76,150	5.2	54,925	6.3
Female	434,640	18.5	240,245	16.4	194,390	22.1
Living with others(2)	155,445	6.6	92,465	6.3	62,980	7.2
Male	41,360	1.8	24,990	1.7	16,380	1.9
Female	114,085	4.9	67,485	4.6	46,605	5.3
Not maintaining their own household	463,215	19.7	179,400	12.2	283,810	32.3
Male	144,635	6.2	64,585	4.4	80,055	9.1
Female	318,570	13.6	114,825	7.8	203,740	23.2
Living in special care institutions	177,550	7.6	35,920	2.4	141,625	16.1
Male	56,185	2.4	15,675	1.1	40,515	4.6
Female	121,360	5.2	20,250	1.4	101,110	11.5
Living in other collective dwellings	28,940	1.2	15,950	1.1	12,990	1.5
Male	10,195	0.4	6,250	0.4	3,945	0.4
Female	18,750	0.8	9,700	0.7	9,045	1.0
Living in other situations(3)	256,725	10.9	127,525	8.7	129,190	14.7
Male	78,265	3.3	42,660	2.9	35,600	4.1
Female	178,465	7.6	84,875	5.8	93,580	10.6

**Table 3.3(concluded)****Living Arrangements, Age and Sex of Elderly Population (65 and over), Canada, 1971, 1981 and 1991**

	Total 65 and over	%	65 to 74 years	%	75 and over	%
<b>Total 1971</b>	<b>1,744,405</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,077,340</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>667,065</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Maintaining their own household	1,306,050	74.9	881,230	81.8	424,820	63.7
Living with spouse(1)	814,040	46.7	604,000	56.1	210,040	31.5
Male	493,540	28.3	352,905	32.8	140,635	21.1
Female	320,500	18.4	251,095	23.3	69,405	10.4
Living alone	320,785	18.4	182,420	16.9	138,365	20.7
Male	87,030	5.0	49,365	4.6	37,665	5.6
Female	233,765	13.4	133,060	12.4	100,705	15.1
Living with others(2)	171,225	9.8	94,810	8.8	76,415	11.5
Male	48,435	2.8	26,610	2.5	21,825	3.3
Female	122,790	7.0	68,205	6.3	54,585	8.2
Not maintaining their own household	438,345	25.1	196,100	18.2	242,240	36.3
Male	152,855	8.8	72,750	6.8	80,105	12.0
Female	285,490	16.4	123,355	11.4	162,135	24.3
Living in special care institutions	101,890	5.8	25,470	2.4	76,420	11.5
Male	35,405	2.0	10,800	1.0	24,605	3.7
Female	66,490	3.8	14,675	1.4	51,815	7.8
Living in other collective dwellings	51,140	2.9	25,730	2.4	25,410	3.8
Male	21,505	1.2	11,740	1.1	9,770	1.5
Female	29,635	1.7	13,995	1.3	15,640	2.3
Living in other situations(3)	285,315	16.4	144,900	13.4	140,415	21.0
Male	95,950	5.5	50,210	4.7	45,730	6.9
Female	189,365	10.9	94,685	8.8	94,675	14.2

(1) Both spouses of an elderly couple are considered living in a household they maintain if one of them is the primary household maintainer.

(2) Includes both relative(s) and non-relative(s).

(3) Includes living with relative(s), non-relative(s) and other living arrangements not specified elsewhere in this table.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 census unpublished tabulation.

## Historical Trends in Living Arrangements of the Elderly

From 1971 to 1991, the number of seniors in Canada increased by 81.0%. Older seniors experienced the highest rate of growth at 90.5%, while the number of younger seniors increased by 75.2%. The aging of the Canadian population has received a great deal of attention from various levels of government and agencies concerned with social welfare. Issues such as health care, housing, and needs of daily living have been singled out for study and social policy development.



## Maintaining One's Own Household: 1971-1991

In the two decades between 1971 and 1991, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of seniors who maintained their own households. This proportion was 74.9% in 1971, 80.3% in 1981 and 83.5% in 1991. The actual number of seniors maintaining households grew by over 100% between 1971 and 1991, from about 1.3 million to slightly over 2.6 million.

The proportion of seniors living alone also increased: 18.4% in 1971, 24.1% in 1981 and 25.9% in 1991. The number of seniors in this category expanded from 320,785 in 1971 to 818,110 in 1991. This increase of 155% over the 20 years represented the fastest growing type of living arrangement among the elderly population.

Senior women were largely responsible for this increase. In 1971, of those senior women living in a household they maintained, about 34.5% lived alone. This proportion increased to 42.8% in 1991. On the other hand, the corresponding proportions of senior men living alone increased only slightly, from 13.8% in 1971 to 16.3% in 1991 (**Table 3.4**).

**Table 3.4**  
**Proportion and Number of Elderly Persons Living Alone by Gender, Canada, 1971 and 1991**

	1971		1991	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Women 65 and over</b>				
Living in the household they maintained(1)	677,055	100.0	1,469,285	100.0
Living alone	233,760	34.5	628,215	42.8
<b>Men 65 and over</b>				
Living in the household they maintained(1)	629,005	100.0	1,167,295	100.0
Living alone	87,030	13.8	189,885	16.3

(1) Both spouses of an elderly couple are considered living in a household they maintain if one of them is the primary household maintainer.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 census unpublished tabulation.

It is generally known that women have a higher life expectancy than men. While men more often live with their spouses in their older years, women tend to move on to widowhood and eventually end their life course without the benefit of the care and support of a spouse.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it is not surprising to observe a higher proportion of senior women living alone.

### **Non-household Maintainers: 1971-1991**

There was a steady decrease in the proportion of seniors not maintaining households over the period 1971 to 1991. In 1971, one in four seniors lived in a household maintained by someone else. This ratio dropped to just under one in five in 1981, and to about one in six in 1991. This steady decrease occurred for both sexes (**Table 3.3**).

Seniors who did not maintain households lived with other relative(s) or non-relative(s) in private households or with a group in collective households. While the proportion of seniors not maintaining households decreased in most of these living arrangements, one exception is observed in the proportion of elderly in special care institutions. Between 1971 and 1981, the proportion of elderly living in this type of institution increased from 5.8% to 7.6%. However, this increase levelled off in 1991, registering only 7.2%. Possible reasons for this levelling off may be the increased difficulty of access to special care institutions, as well as improvements in home care services that enable more seniors to remain in their own homes.

# Chapter

# 4

## Work-family Responsibilities and Economic Well-being

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From 1971 to 1991, major changes occurred in family structure and in women's labour force participation. The challenge of balancing paid work and family responsibilities has implications for the workplace, child care, family well-being and time use.

### Labour Force Participation

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Since 1971, the labour force participation rate of women has steadily grown.<sup>1</sup> The rate increased from 39.9% in 1971 to 52.1% in 1981, reaching nearly 60% in 1991. Overall, in 1991, women represented 45.0% of the total labour force, up from 34.6% in 1971. (Appendix Tables A.4 and A.5).

Several factors have contributed to the increased participation of women in the paid work force. These include the necessity of two incomes to maintain a certain lifestyle, higher educational attainment by women, growth in the service sector of the economy and changing attitudes. This increased level of involvement has a number of ramifications, including the requirement for child care, and work and family policies, which will be discussed later.

In the last decade, the participation rate for all women with children at home increased significantly. It was 68.4% in 1991, up from 60.6% in 1986 and 52.4% in 1981. The increase for female spouses whose children were all under the age of 6 was even more pronounced, increasing from 49.4% in 1981 to 69.0% in 1991 (Table 4.1). Over the same period, there was also a large increase for those with children both younger and older than 6. In contrast, the rate for female spouses without children at home has increased only slightly; from 50.0% in 1981 to 53.3% in 1991.

**Table 4.1**  
**Labour Force Participation Rates for Female Spouses, Canada, 1981-1991**

	Total	Without children at home	With children at home	All children less than 6 years	Some children less than 6 years	All children 6 years and over	Number of children at home		
							1	2	3+
1981	51.4	50.0	52.2	49.4	44.8	54.9	53.6	53.6	48.1
1986	57.3	50.7	61.2	62.0	55.9	62.1	61.3	63.6	56.5
1991	63.4	53.3	70.1	69.0	65.4	71.6	68.4	73.3	66.6

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Census Families in Private Households – Selected Characteristics*, Catalogue No. 92-935 and *Families: Part 2*, Catalogue No. 93-107 and 1991 Census unpublished tabulations.

### Lone-parent Families

Among lone-parent families, 60.1% of female lone parents and 76.7% of male lone parents were in the labour force in 1991. Although there was a small increase for females from 1981 to 1991, the rates for male lone parents have remained virtually unchanged since 1981.

The rates for female lone parents remain lower than those for wives and female common-law partners with children at home. Indeed, the participation rate for female lone parents whose children were all under the age of 6 declined from 58.6% in 1986 to 54.8% in 1991 (**Table 4.2**). The increase for those who had children both younger and older than 6 was very slight. Female lone parents' participation may be constrained by several factors, including level of schooling and availability of affordable day-care.

In nearly one-quarter of female lone-parent families, no family member was in the labour force. By comparison, this was the case in just over 10% of male lone-parent families and 14.8% of husband-wife families. Of female lone-parent families where the parent was not in the labour force, 39.9% had at least one child who was, while the proportion for male lone-parent families was 55.6%.

**Table 4.2****Labour Force Participation Rates for Female Lone Parents, Canada, 1981-1991**

	Total	All children less than 6 years	Some children less than 6 years	All children 6 years and over	Number of children at home		
					1	2	3+
1981	53.8	54.9	46.6	54.2	52.8	58.1	49.5
1986	57.7	58.6	51.5	58.1	56.2	62.3	53.3
1991	60.1	54.8	52.0	62.1	57.8	65.7	56.3

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Census Families in Private Households - Selected Characteristics*, Catalogue No. 92-935 and *Families: Part 2*, Catalogue No. 93-107 and 1991 Census unpublished tabulations.

**Husband-wife Families**

The proportion of husband-wife families in which both spouses were in the labour force continued to increase. In 1991, it was 60.0%, compared with 48.9% in 1981 and 54.1% in 1986.

Families of common-law couples were more likely to have both spouses participating than were families of now-married couples (77.1% compared to 57.3%). This may be partially explained by the younger age distribution of common-law partners. For example, for common-law couples with both partners in the labour force, almost half of the female partners were between the ages of 15 and 29. The proportion for wives in the same age group was less than one-fifth.

**Changes in the Family and the Workplace**

As discussed above, the labour force participation rate for mothers with young children has increased. The traditional family consisting of a husband in the labour force and a wife at home has been displaced by the dual-earner family. In 1967, dual-earner families accounted for only 32.7% of all husband-wife families. By 1991, that proportion had nearly doubled to 61.2%.<sup>2</sup> Another related development is the aging of the Canadian population. As the population ages, the demand on families to care for elderly parents increases. Elder care requirements are expected to increase as the population ages.

## **Work-family Conflict**

Mothers and fathers in dual-income families, or lone parents in the labour force, must cope with both work demands and family obligations, including care-giving and household maintenance. The potential conflict between these two types of demands has generated interest in the issue of work-family conflict, specifically employees who have difficulty co-ordinating the demands of work responsibilities with the needs of dependent family members.<sup>3</sup>

Work demands can impinge on family roles, the quality of family relationships and the well-being of family members. Conversely, family roles can interfere with work performance and/or commitment to one's job. In the latter case, the employer may be affected by lower productivity, higher rates of absenteeism and job turnover, while the employee's opportunity for career advancement may also suffer.

Women are more than twice as likely as men to be absent from work because of personal or family responsibilities. The presence of young children in the family is a factor contributing to work absenteeism among women. In an average week in 1991, 10.9% of women in two-parent families with at least one child under age 6, and 5.9% of comparable female lone parents, lost time from work due to personal or family responsibilities. For all women whose youngest child was aged between 6 and 15, the absentee rate fell to about 2%.<sup>4</sup>

## **Workplace Policies and Programs and Family Needs**

The dramatic change in the structure of the traditional family, and the increased awareness of work-family conflict by employers and policy-makers has raised the issue of the need for changes to traditional work arrangements. A number of employer initiatives have been suggested to reduce such conflict.<sup>5</sup> These include:

- **alternative work arrangements**

"flextime", compressed work week, shorter work week/day, job sharing, work-at-home arrangements;

- **family supportive benefits**

information and referral services, parent education seminars, sick children care, company child care centres; and

- **leaves of absence**

maternity leave, pre-maternity leave, extended maternity leave, paternity leave, leave for family-related reasons.

## Child Care in Canada

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As more parents are combining work and family responsibilities, the availability and affordability of child care is an important concern. The 1988 Canadian National Child Care Study examined parents' child care needs and use patterns.<sup>6</sup>

### Non-parental Child Care

This study found that an estimated 2.7 million children needed child care while their parents worked. Just over 40% of these children were under 6 years of age, while the remainder were aged 6 to 12.

One of the major findings of the study was that care in addition to parental care is common for Canadian children. In fact, 57.5% of children under the age of 13 were in at least one non-parental child care arrangement in a given week. The balance were cared for by their parents only.

More than half of infants (17 months and under) and nearly two-thirds of toddlers (18 to 35 months) were in non-parental care at least part of the week. For children 3 to 5 years of age, the figure rose to nearly 80%. Just under half of children aged 6 to 12 spent time in non-parental care outside of school hours.

Most of the children under age 13 were in informal child-care arrangements, such as care by relatives or unlicensed day-care providers, while a small percentage were in organized or regulated services<sup>7</sup> (**Table 4.3**).

Just over one-third of infants were cared for by a relative in the relative's home, or in an unlicensed family day-care home, while only 3.2% were enrolled in a day-care centre. The number of infants in licensed family day-care homes was too small to be reportable. Informal child-care arrangements were used most often for toddlers as well, with licensed facilities least used. Nearly half of children aged 3 to 5 were enrolled in kindergarten and nursery school programs. Informal child-care arrangements were also frequently used for this age group.

For 6 to 9 year-olds, the most frequently used child-care arrangement (excluding school) was care by a family member. Care in an unlicensed family day-care, by a relative in the relative's home or by a non-relative in the child's home were the next most often used. The most frequently used arrangements (excluding school) for children 10 to 12 years old were care by a family member, a parent at work and a relative in the relative's home.

**Table 4.3**  
**Children in Selected Types of Child Care, Canada, 1988(1)**

Type of care	Age of child				
	0 to 17 months	18 to 35 months	3 to 5 years(2)	6 to 9 years(2)	10 to 12 years(2)
	%				
By a relative in the relative's home	17.7	16.1	13.8	8.8	5.6
Unlicensed family day-care	15.9	18.4	17.6	12.8	5.5
By a family member	15.3	18.5	20.1	29.2	43.9
By a relative in the child's home	12.3	11.6	10.5	7.3	5.0
By a non-relative in the child's home	10.3	13.2	11.9	8.8	4.2
By a parent at work	5.5	10.4	10.8	8.3	8.0
Kindergarten	N/A	N/A	30.0	0.5	N/A
Nursery programs	N/A	5.7	19.4	--	N/A
Licensed family day-care	--	2.1	1.4	0.6	--
Day-care centre	3.2	9.6	10.8	1.2	--

(1) The table shows the percentage of children in various types of child care within that age group. Since children participated in more than one care arrangement, the columns are not additive.

(2) Excluding school.

N/A Not applicable to this age group.

-- Amount too small to be expressed.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Where are the Children? An Overview of Child-Care Arrangements in Canada*, Catalogue No. 89-527E.

## Time Use

With the increased labour force participation of women, it is important to examine how men and women allocate their time. For example, are employed women still primarily responsible for housework and child care? If so, then these responsibilities could be a source of work and family conflict for employed women who have families.



## Gender Differences<sup>8</sup>

The 1992 General Social Survey examined how Canadians allocated their time to activities such as paid and unpaid work, as well as to personal care activities and free time, etc. Productive activity included paid work, domestic work, primary child care, shopping and education. The study found that while men and women devoted almost the same amount of time to productive activity, the way that time was spent differed by gender. In 1992, men averaged 4 hours a day on paid work, compared to 2.4 hours for women (averaged over the total population and a 7-day week). This latter trend reflects, in part, differences in labour force participation. Women spent an average of 4.5 hours a day on unpaid work (which included domestic tasks and voluntary activities), while men spent 2.6 hours on these activities. While women allocated an average of 1.1 hours per day to house-cleaning and laundry, and 1.2 hours to cooking and washing up, men spent 13 and 22 minutes, respectively on these activities.

## Family Structure and Main Activity

Time allocation differed by family structure, presence of children and main activity, i.e. employed or keeping house (**Table 4.4**).<sup>9</sup> Employed men with a partner, but without children, spent an average of 6.9 hours per day on paid work and 1.2 hours on domestic work. Women in the same situation spent 6.1 hours a day on paid work, and almost twice as much time on domestic work, at 2.1 hours.<sup>10</sup>

While employed women with at least one child under 5 years spent somewhat less time on paid work than comparable men, they allocated on average nearly double the time on domestic work and child care. Employed men with a partner and young children spent an average of 6.8 hours on paid work, 1.4 on domestic work, and 1.2 on primary child care. Women in the same category spent 5.2, 2.4 and 2.2 hours respectively on these activities.

Although men and women with older children devoted less time to primary child care than those with younger children, the gender differences remained for both paid and domestic work. Men with children 5 years of age or older allocated an average of 6.5 hours a day on paid work, 1.5 on domestic work, and 0.3 hours on primary child care. Women spent 5.2, 2.6 and 0.7 hours on these same activities.

**Table 4.4**

**Average Time Spent on Selected Productive Activities by Gender, Employment Status and Family Type for Canada, 1992**

	<b>Paid work</b>	<b>Domestic work</b>	<b>Primary child care</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>(Hours per day)</b>			
Population 15 years and over	3.6	2.0	0.4	6.0
Male, employed, with partner, no children	6.9	1.2	N/A	8.1
Female, employed, with partner, no children	6.1	2.1	N/A	8.2
Male, employed, with partner, children < 5 (1)	6.8	1.4	1.2	9.4
Female, employed, with partner, children < 5 (1)	5.2	2.4	2.2	9.8
Male, employed, with partner, children 5 and over (2)	6.5	1.5	0.3	8.3
Female, employed, with partner, children 5 and over (2)	5.2	2.6	0.7	8.5
Female, employed, lone parent, children < 5 (1)	4.6	1.6	1.8	8.0
Female, employed, lone parent, children 5 and over (2)	5.5	2.0	0.7	8.2
Female, keeping house, with partner, no children	0.2	4.0	N/A	4.2
Female, keeping house, with partner, children < 5 (1)	0.5	3.9	3.2	7.6
Female, keeping house, with partner, children 5 and over (2)	0.6	4.2	1.2	6.0
Female, keeping house, lone parent, children < 5 (1)	0.1	3.2	3.7	7.0
Female, keeping house, lone parent, children 5 and over (2)	0.1	4.2	1.4	5.7

(1) At least one child under 5 years.

(2) All children 5 years and over.

N/A Not applicable.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1992 General Social Survey, unpublished data.

## Female lone parents

Employed female lone parents with at least one child under the age of 5 spent an average of 4.6 hours a day on paid work, 1.6 on domestic work, and 1.8 on primary child care. Those with children aged 5 years and over allocated 5.5, 2.0 and 0.7 hours a day to these three activities.

## Women keeping house

As might be expected, women without children whose main activity was keeping house spent nearly twice as much time as their employed counterparts on domestic work. Compared to employed women with children, women keeping house devoted more time to domestic work and primary child care.

Similarly, female lone parents whose main activity was keeping house spent at least twice as much time as employed female lone parents on domestic work and primary child care.

## Family Income<sup>11</sup>

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Three dimensions of income are examined here: (1) total income<sup>12</sup> – based upon total income received by the family; (2) per capita income<sup>13</sup> – a measure of income that takes into account the number of persons in the family; and (3) incidence of low income – the percentage of economic families who are below the low income cut-offs.<sup>14</sup> The total income of an economic family is a good measure of the purchasing power available to the family, while per capita income takes into account the number of persons the family income has to support. Incidence of low income indicates the proportion of families below the low income cut-offs and therefore likely to be in difficult financial circumstances.

### Family Income for All Families

Average family income for 1990 was \$52,505, per capita family income was \$18,077, and there was a 13.2% incidence of low income (**Table 4.5**). For non-elderly families,<sup>15</sup> average family income was \$54,372, per capita family income was \$17,988, and 13.7% were low income families. Elderly families had an average family income of \$41,887, a per capita family income of \$18,584, and a 10.3% incidence of low income. Elderly families' lower average family income and higher per capita income are due to the fact that such families are generally smaller, often consisting of an elderly retired couple living alone.

**Table 4.5**  
**Economic Family Income, Canada, 1990**

	Number of families	Average family income(\$)	Per capita income(\$)	Applicable low income universe	Low income families	Incidence of low income
<b>All economic families</b>	<b>7,421,600</b>	<b>52,505</b>	<b>18,077</b>	<b>7,357,705</b>	<b>972,855</b>	<b>13.2</b>
<b>Non-elderly families</b>	<b>6,311,950</b>	<b>54,372</b>	<b>17,988</b>	<b>6,254,965</b>	<b>858,850</b>	<b>13.7</b>
Husband and wife only	1,627,215	52,309	26,154	1,618,720	147,915	9.1
Husband-wife, no children, additional persons	784,670	73,806	21,106	779,695	43,235	5.5
Total husband-wife families, no children	2,411,890	59,302	24,512	2,398,415	191,150	8.0
Husband-wife, children, no additional persons	2,404,525	54,919	14,434	2,381,505	259,320	10.9
Husband-wife, children, additional persons	563,210	69,780	14,688	554,690	42,835	7.7
Total husband-wife families, with children	2,967,735	57,739	14,482	2,936,195	302,155	10.3
Total husband-wife families	5,379,625	58,440	18,979	5,334,610	493,300	9.2
Lone-parent families, male head, no additional persons	65,475	34,284	14,290	64,430	16,410	25.5
Lone-parent families, male head, additional persons	22,035	50,174	13,718	21,540	3,840	17.8
Total male lone-parent families	87,510	38,285	14,146	85,970	20,250	23.6
Lone-parent families, female head, no additional persons	403,785	19,460	7,905	399,780	243,990	61.0
Lone-parent families, female head, additional persons	82,345	33,721	9,263	80,095	30,135	37.6
Total female lone-parent families	486,125	21,876	8,135	479,875	274,125	57.1
Total lone-parent families	573,635	24,379	9,052	565,845	294,375	52.0
Other families	358,690	41,317	17,418	354,510	71,175	20.1
<b>Elderly families</b>	<b>1,109,650</b>	<b>41,887</b>	<b>18,584</b>	<b>1,102,740</b>	<b>114,005</b>	<b>10.3</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census unpublished tabulation. Refers to the calendar year 1990.

## Incomes of Husband-wife Families

Husband-wife families with no children at home had an average family income of \$59,302, a per capita income of \$24,512, and only an 8% incidence of low income. Husband-wife families with children had an average family income of \$57,739, a per capita income of \$14,482, and a 10.3% incidence of low income.

## Incomes of Lone-parent Families

Lone-parent families had an average family income of \$24,379, a per capita income of \$9,052, and a 52% incidence of low income. Lone-parent families had **substantially** lower incomes than husband-wife families with children. Average family income for husband-wife families with children was nearly 2.4 times greater than that for lone-parent families. There was a smaller difference in per capita income, but the incidence of low income in lone-parent families was much higher than in husband-wife families.

## Incomes of Female Lone-parent Families

Male lone-parent families had an average family income of \$38,285, a per capita income of \$14,146, and a 23.6% incidence of low income. Female lone-parent families had an average family income of \$21,876, a per capita family income of \$8,135, and a 57.1% incidence of low income.

Clearly, female lone-parent families have much lower incomes than male lone-parent and other families. This is of particular concern, since female lone parents head 82% of all lone-parent families in Canada. The higher incidence of low income is but one illustration of the difficult situation facing female lone-parent families in Canada.

## Shelter Costs

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Monthly shelter costs vary according to whether families have children and whether they own or rent their dwellings. Now-married couple and common-law couple families with children who lived in owned dwellings had higher average monthly shelter costs than those who did not have children at home (**Table 4.6**). Similarly, while those families who rented had lower average monthly payments than those who owned, the presence of children correlated with increased shelter costs. Male and female lone-parent families who lived in rented dwellings spent an average of \$605 and \$547, respectively, on shelter costs. Comparable monthly payments for those who lived in owned dwellings were higher, at \$691 and \$642 respectively.

It is generally considered that families paying 30% or more of their income on shelter costs<sup>16</sup> may be carrying a financial burden that could reduce the resources available for other expenses such as food and clothing.

Renter families are more likely than home-owner families to be paying 30% or more of their household income on shelter. In 1991, this was the case for families of now-married and common-law couples, as well as for lone-parent families (Table 4.6).

A higher proportion of lone-parent families than other families, allocated 30% or more of their income to housing expenses. Just over one-quarter of female lone-parent families living in owned dwellings and over half of those who were renting did so. For male lone-parent families, 18.1% of home-owners and 30.5% of renters paid 30% or more of their income on shelter. This compares with 13.7% of now-married couples with children who were home-owners and 20.9% of those who were renters. Similar figures for common-law couples with children were 17.4% and 24.0%, respectively.

Female lone-parent families may be more affected by the issue of housing affordability because:<sup>17</sup> they tend to earn less in the labour market, they are more likely to work part-time, and they often face discrimination in the rental housing market. The issue of affordable housing is important given the number of lone-parent families, particularly those headed by women.

**Table 4.6**  
**Shelter Costs by Selected Characteristics, Canada, 1991(1)**

	Family structure						
	All families	Married couples		Common-law couples		Lone-parent families	
		without children	with children	without children	with children	Male	Female
Number (000s)	7,102	2,077	3,389	417	285	159	774
Owned dwelling (000s)	5,144	1,602	2,792	174	151	99	326
Average owner's major payments (monthly) (\$)	723	558	817	805	843	691	642
Owner's major payments > = 30% of household income (000s)	710	171	383	27	26	18	84
% of owners > = 30%	13.8	10.7	13.7	15.6	17.4	18.1	25.9
Rented dwelling (000s)	1,957	475	597	243	135	60	448
Average gross rent (monthly) (\$)	593	590	644	559	590	605	547
Gross rent > = 30% of household income (000s)	559	105	125	43	32	18	236
% of renters > = 30%	28.6	22.2	20.9	17.7	24.0	30.5	52.6

(1) Refers to families living in non-farm, non-reserve households and excludes households with negative or zero household income in 1990.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census unpublished tabulation.

## Conclusion

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This report has documented changes that have affected the Canadian family since 1971. While the emphasis has been on change and diversity, the fact remains that the proportion of Canadians living in families has remained quite constant.

Recent changes in the family have raised questions about an accurate and meaningful definition of "family". It has been shown that there is no universal definition, but many definitions each emphasizing different aspects of the family.

Family definitions depend, to a large extent, on who is doing the defining, and the purpose for which the definitions are provided. For example, university researchers studying the family would likely use different definitions than government bodies, which tend to define families for the purpose of program and policy administration. Definitions of the family may be politically controversial, because they **include** broad categories of persons, and at the same time **exclude** others.

Changes in demographic patterns since 1971 are apparent. For example, the marriage rate has declined steadily. Some reasons for this include the dramatic increase in the number of common-law families over the past decade, and the fact that young persons are postponing marriage. On the other hand, the divorce rate has increased dramatically since the *Divorce Act* of 1968, followed by the liberalization of the law in 1985. This has indirectly led to a higher rate of remarriage. Also, the birth rate has decreased, resulting in smaller family size.

Related to these demographic changes are changes in family structure. From 1971 to 1991, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of lone-parent families, as well as an increase in childless husband-wife families. In addition, the aging of the Canadian population is reflected by a continuing increase in the number of empty nest families.

There have been changes in the living arrangements of Canadians since 1981, specifically, an increase in the number of young adults living with their parent(s) and an increase in the proportion of seniors living in their own households, either with a spouse or alone.

The labour force participation of women has increased dramatically since the beginning of the 1970s. This change has generated an increased demand for day-care, and for workplace programs and policies to deal with work-family conflict.

The changing family trends documented in this report are likely to have an impact on policy and planning in health, education, welfare, and housing programs in both the public and private sectors. Canada, like other advanced industrial countries, is undergoing a process of change and restructuring in its economy, workplace, and government. These changes are likely to have a broad impact on family functioning and well-being. Future studies of the Canadian family will document these effects.



## Footnotes

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### Notes to Introduction

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- <sup>1</sup> Children here refers to never-married sons and/or daughters, regardless of age, living in the same dwelling as their parent(s).

### Notes to Chapter 1

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- <sup>1</sup> Margrit Eichler, *Families in Canada Today*. Toronto: Gage Publishing Ltd. 1st edition, 1983 and 2nd edition, 1988. Pierre Dionne, The Family Constitutes the Basic Unit of Society, Keynote Addresses to the 3rd International Seminar, Vienna International Centre, February 1991.
- <sup>2</sup> Jean E. Veivers, *Continuity and Change in Marriage and Family*. Toronto: Holt Rhinehart and Winston, 1991.
- <sup>3</sup> See Statistics Canada, *Health Reports* Supplement Nos. 14 & 15, 1992; No. 16, 1991 and *Health Reports* 1992, Catalogue No. 82-003.
- <sup>4</sup> The divorce rate was derived per 100,000 population. See *Vital Statistics, Vol. 2, Marriages and Divorces* for 1971 rate; see Statistics Canada, *Health Reports* 1992, Catalogue No. 82-003 for 1991 rate.
- <sup>5</sup> See Lynn Barr, *Basic Facts on Families in Canada, Past and Present*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 89-516, Table 1.1, 1993.
- <sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, March 2, 1993, Catalogue No. 11-001E.
- <sup>7</sup> For example, it was indicated that by 2011, close to one-quarter of all men and 30% of all women will be in the broad age group of 55 and over because of the effect of the baby boom population. See G. Priest, paper presented in the Workshop on *Changing Clients, Economics and Expectations in Housing for Seniors*, The Canadian Association on Gerontology, Edmonton, October 22, 1992.
- <sup>8</sup> The following summarizes the work of Eichler (1983) in her review of Murdock, Coser and Stephens' definitions of the family, as well as her proposed definition.
- <sup>9</sup> Transition, March 1992, *Vanier Institute of the Family*, p. 8. Also in *Canadian Families in Transition*, Vanier Institute of the Family, 1992, pp. 34-35.

- <sup>10</sup> *Family Studies*, Ontario Ministry of Education, Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1987, p. 4.
- <sup>11</sup> See Transition, March 1992, Vanier Institute of the Family, p.5.
- <sup>12</sup> See Jean Dumas, *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada 1993*, Current Demographic Analysis, Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 91-209E, Table 13.
- <sup>13</sup> See Transition, March 1992, Vanier Institute of the Family, p.13.
- <sup>14</sup> For more explanation and examples, see the section on the relationship between census and economic families in Wally Boxhill and Brian Hamm, *User's Guide to 1986 Census Data on Families*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 99-113E, 1989.

## Notes to Chapter 2

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- <sup>1</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, March 3, 1993, Catalogue No. 11-001E and *Selected Marriage Statistics 1921-1990*, Catalogue No. 82-552.
- <sup>2</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *Marriage and Conjugal Life in Canada*, Catalogue No. 91-534E.
- <sup>3</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *Health Reports*, Catalogue No. 82-003S17 and *Vital Statistics*, Vol. 2, *Marriages and Divorces*, Catalogue No. 84-205.
- <sup>4</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *Health Reports*, Catalogue No. 82-003S17.
- <sup>5</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *Historical Birth and Fertility Statistics*, 1921-1990, Catalogue No. 82-553 and *The Daily*, March 17, 1993, Catalogue No. 11-001E.
- <sup>6</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *1991 Census, Families: Number, Type and Structure*, Catalogue No. 93-312 and historical census publications.
- <sup>7</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *1991 Census, Age, Sex and Marital Status*, Catalogue No. 93-310.
- <sup>8</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *"Common-law: a growing alternative"*, Canadian Social Trends, Catalogue No. 11-008E, Winter 1991.
- <sup>9</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *Marriage and Conjugal Life in Canada*, Catalogue No. 91-534E.
- <sup>10</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *1991 Census, Families: Number, Type and Structure*, Catalogue No. 93-312 and historical census publications.
- <sup>11</sup> Husband-wife families include now-married and common-law couple families.
- <sup>12</sup> See Gordon Priest, *Husband-wife Families: Diversity the Norm*, 1993, unpublished.
- <sup>13</sup> Source: Unpublished census tabulations and Statistics Canada, *1991 Census, Families: Social and Economic Characteristics*, Catalogue No. 93-320.
- <sup>14</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *1991 Census, Families: Number, Type and Structure*, Catalogue No. 93-312 and historical census publications.

## Notes to Chapter 3

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- <sup>1</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *1991 Census Dictionary*, Catalogue No. 92-301E.
- <sup>2</sup> See Thomas K. Burch, 1986 Census of Canada, *Families in Canada*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 98-127, 1990.
- <sup>3</sup> In the census, persons living alone must be 15 years of age or over.
- <sup>4</sup> Household maintainers are persons living in private households who are responsible for the payment of the rent or mortgage, or the taxes and utilities. For the purpose of this report, both spouses of an elderly couple are considered living in a household they maintain if one of them is the primary household maintainer.
- <sup>5</sup> See Leroy Stone, *Family and Friendship Ties Among Canada's Seniors*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 89-508, 1988.
- <sup>6</sup> See Priest, G., *Current demographics and living arrangements of Canada's elderly*. In: G.M. Gutman and A.V. Wister (Eds.), *Progressive Accommodation for Seniors: Interfacing Shelter and Services*. Vancouver: The Gerontology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University, 1994.

## Notes to Chapter 4

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- <sup>1</sup> The participation rate refers to the total labour force (in reference week) expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over, excluding institutional residents. The participation rate for a particular group (e.g., women with children at home) is the labour force in that group expressed as a percentage of the population for that group.
- <sup>2</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *Characteristics of Dual-Earner Families 1991*, Catalogue No. 13-215.
- <sup>3</sup> D. Lero, "Risk Factors in Work/Family Conflict: Preliminary Findings from the National Child Care Study." In: *Proceedings: Work Life, Family Life: Innovations in Human Resource Management*, (September, 1991) unpublished.
- <sup>4</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, *Women in the Workplace*, Catalogue No. 71-534E. The "Absence from Work Survey" uses the Labour Force Survey economic family concept.
- <sup>5</sup> D. Lero and K.L. Johnson, "Integrating Work and Family Responsibilities: A Review of Workplace Policies and Programs in Canada." In: *Proceedings: Work Life, Family Life: Innovations in Human Resource Management* (September, 1991), unpublished.
- <sup>6</sup> See Statistics Canada and Health and Welfare Canada, *Canadian National Child Care Study – Introductory Report*, Catalogue No. 89-526E, *Where are the Children? An Overview of Child Care Arrangements in Canada*, Catalogue No. 89-527E and *Canadian National Childcare Study: Parental Work Patterns and Child Care Needs*, Catalogue No. 89-529E. Family estimates were based on the economic family concept. Dual-earner families were defined as two parent families in which both spouses were employed, full or part-time, during the reference week.

- <sup>7</sup> In the Canadian National Child Care Study, informal child care arrangements included self-care or "latch-key" arrangements, care by parents and other family members, neighbours, friends and by licensed and unlicensed in-home providers. Regulated care included day care centres, licensed family day care, kindergarten and nursery school programmes. Source: Statistics Canada, *Where are the Children? An Overview of Child Care Arrangements in Canada*, Catalogue No. 89-527E and *Women in the Workplace*, Catalogue No. 71-534.
- <sup>8</sup> The information in this section is taken from the preliminary report on time use from the 1992 General Social Survey, which asked how Canadians allocate their time to paid work, domestic work and primary child care. **Paid Work** included work for pay at main or other job, overtime work, unpaid work in a family business or farm, travel during work, waiting/delays at work, coffee breaks, hobbies/crafts done for sale or exchange, looking for work, travelling to/from work. **Domestic Work** included cooking, washing up, house cleaning, and laundry, maintenance and repair, other housework. **Primary Child Care** included baby care, child care, helping/teaching/reprimanding, reading/talking, conversation with child, play with children, medical care, unpaid babysitting, transportation of children. Other productive activities not examined in this report are shopping, education and civic and voluntary activity.
- <sup>9</sup> "Time Use," a preliminary report on the 1992 General Social Survey, unpublished. In the GSS, respondents were asked to select a main activity.
- <sup>10</sup> The employment category used in Table 4.4 does not differentiate full-time work from part-time work.
- <sup>11</sup> Family income in this subsection refers to the total income of all members of an economic family.
- <sup>12</sup> Total family income refers to the total money received from the following sources during 1990 by persons 15 years of age or older: total wages and salaries; net income from unincorporated non-farm business and/or professional practice; net farm self-employment income; all government transfer payments; dividends and interest on bonds, deposits, savings certificates and other investment income; retirement pensions, superannuation and annuities and other money income.
- <sup>13</sup> Per capita income is calculated by dividing the total family income by the number of persons in the family.
- <sup>14</sup> Low income cut-offs take into account family income, family size and degree of urbanization. See Statistics Canada, *1991 Census Dictionary*. Catalogue No. 92-301E for details.
- <sup>15</sup> Non-elderly families are those whose head is under 65 years of age, while elderly families have a head who is 65 years or over.
- <sup>16</sup> Shelter costs refer to a combination of monthly rent or mortgage payments, property taxes, and utility payments. The discussion in this section refers to non-farm, non-reserve households and excludes households with negative or zero household income in 1990.
- <sup>17</sup> Source: Pierre Filion and Trudi E. Bunting, 1986 Census of Canada, *Affordability of Housing in Canada*. 1986 Census, Catalogue No. 98-130, 1990, p.22.

## Appendix Tables

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**Appendix Table A.1**  
**Marriages and Rates for Selected Years, Canada**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of marriages</b>	<b>Rate per 1,000 population</b>
1931	68,239	6.4
1961	128,475	7.0
1971	191,324	8.9
1972	200,470	9.2
1976	193,343	8.4
1977	187,344	8.0
1979	187,811	7.9
1981	190,082	7.8
1982	188,360	7.6
1983	184,675	7.4
1984	185,597	7.4
1985	184,096	7.3
1986	175,518	6.9
1987	182,151	7.1
1988	187,728	7.2
1989	190,640	7.3
1990	187,737	7.1
1991	172,251	6.4

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Selected Marriage Statistics, 1921-1990*, Catalogue No. 82-552.  
 Statistics Canada, *Health Reports, 1992 Volume 4, No. 4*, Catalogue No. 82-003.

**Appendix Table A.2**  
**Divorces and Rates for Selected Years, Canada**

Year	Number of divorces	Rate per 1,000 population
1968	11,343	0.5
1969	26,093	1.2
1970	29,775	1.4
1972	32,389	1.5
1973	36,704	1.7
1974	45,019	2.0
1975	50,611	2.2
1976	54,207	2.4
1982	70,436	2.9
1985	61,980	2.4
1986	78,160	3.1
1987	90,985	3.6
1988	79,872	3.1
1989	80,716	3.1
1990	78,152	2.9
1991	77,031	2.8

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Vital Statistics, Vol. 2, Marriages and Divorces*, Catalogue No. 84-205.

Statistics Canada, *Health Reports*, Catalogue No. 82-003S17.

Statistics Canada, *Health Reports, Volume 4, No. 4*, Catalogue No. 82-003.



**Appendix Table A.3**  
**Births and Crude Birth Rates for Selected Years, Canada**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of births</b>	<b>Rate per 1,000 population</b>
1947	372,589	28.9
1959	479,275	27.4
1966	387,710	19.4
1971	362,187	16.8
1981	371,346	15.3
1987	369,742	14.4
1988	376,795	14.5
1989	392,661	15.0
1990	405,486	15.3
1991	402,528	14.9

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Selected Birth and Fertility Statistics, Canada 1921-1990*, Catalogue No. 82-553.  
 Statistics Canada, *Births, 1991*, Catalogue No. 84-210.

**Appendix Table A.4**  
**Labour Force Participation Rates by Sex, Canada, 1971-1991**

Census year	Population 15 years and over		Total in labour force		Participation rate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1971	7,540,465	7,649,035	5,760,245	3,053,100	76.4	39.9
1976	8,429,525	8,666,905	6,375,965	3,878,690	75.6	44.8
1981	9,257,095	9,604,935	7,266,805	5,000,265	78.5	52.1
1986	9,720,980	10,196,375	7,488,470	5,653,275	77.0	55.4
1991	10,536,650	11,067,520	8,057,835	6,601,795	76.5	59.7

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Activity*. 1991 Census of Canada, Catalogue No. 93-324, Table 3. (Based on 1971 Labour Force Concepts)

# Appendix Table A.5

## Labour Force – Percentage Distribution by Sex, Canada, 1971-1991

Census year	Total in the labour force			% of Total labour force		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1971	8,813,345	5,760,245	3,053,100	100	65.4	34.6
1976	10,254,655	6,375,965	3,878,690	100	62.2	37.8
1981	12,267,075	7,266,805	5,000,265	100	59.2	40.8
1986	13,141,745	7,488,470	5,653,275	100	57.0	43.0
1991	14,659,630	8,057,835	6,601,795	100	55.0	45.0

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Activity*. 1991 Census of Canada, Catalogue No. 93-324, Table 3. (Based on 1971 Labour Force Concepts)





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